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PTQ5937

RELEASED IN PART  
B1, 1.4(B), 1.4(D)

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ACTION WHA-01

INFO	LOG-00	ACQ-01	SMEC-00	DODE-00	DOEE-00	SRPP-00	DS-00
	EUR-01	H-01	TEDE-00	INR-00	LAB-01	L-01	ADS-00
	AC-01	NSAE-00	OMB-01	OPIC-01	PA-00	PM-00	PRS-00
	ACE-00	P-00	SCT-00	SP-00	IRM-01	TRSE-00	PMB-00
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R 071819Z JUL 99  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4582  
INFO USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
AMEMBASSY BRASILIA  
AMEMBASSY BOGOTA  
AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN  
AMEMBASSY LA PAZ  
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AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN  
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AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
AMEMBASSY MEXICO  
AMEMBASSY MADRID  
AMEMBASSY OTTAWA  
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CIA WASHDC

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 CARACAS 002123

DEPT FOR ACTING A/S ROMERO AND WHA/AND

E.O. 12958: DECL: 07/07/09  
TAGS: PGOV, PREL, VE  
SUBJECT: PERSONAL ATTACK ON CHAVEZ MARKS INDEPENDENCE DAY CEREMONY

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR JOHN F. MAISTO. REASON: 1.5(B) AND (D).

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SUMMARY  
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1. (C) POLITICAL GADFLY, KNEE-JERK LEFTIST, HISTORIAN, WELL-KNOWN

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
REVIEW AUTHORITY: ALAN H FLANIGAN  
CLASSIFICATION: CONFIDENTIAL REASON: 1.4(B), 1.4(D)  
DECLASSIFY AFTER: 6 JUL 2024  
DATE/CASE ID: 28 FEB 2007 200503244

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WRITER AND SPEAKER, FORMER CHAVEZ ALLY, AND DISAPPOINTED OFFICE SEEKER JORGE OLAVARRIA LAUNCHED A SCATHING ATTACK ON PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ, CALLING HIM A "DEMAGOGUE" AND ACCUSING HIM OF VARIOUS VIOLATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTION IN THE KEYNOTE SPEECH DURING THE TRADITIONAL JULY 5 INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATION. THE DIATRIBE, WHICH OCCURRED IN CONGRESS AND BEFORE THE DIPLOMATIC COMMUNITY AND THE NATIONAL MEDIA, WAS INTERRUPTED AT LEAST THREE TIMES BY SENATE PRESIDENT AND CHAVEZ ALLY LUIS ALFONSO DAVILA. SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT CELIA SOSA GOMEZ AND MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY HIGH-COMMAND WALKED OUT OF THE SESSION.

2. (C) THE INCIDENT FOLLOWED THE TRADITIONAL READING OF VENEZUELA'S DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE AND A CONCILIATORY, STATESMAN-LIKE SPEECH BY CHAVEZ AT THE SENATE. INVITING OLAVARRIA, CLEARLY THE WORK OF THE DEMOCRATIC ACTION (AD) PARTY AS AN ACT OF POLITICAL REVENGE AGAINST THE PRESIDENT, BACKFIRED, AND WAS ROUNDLY CRITICIZED BY MOST OBSERVERS, INCLUDING LEADING MEMBERS OF THE  
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OPPOSITION WHO WERE OFFENDED AT OLAVARRIA'S USE OF THE INDEPENDENCE DAY KEYNOTE ADDRESS AS A FORUM FOR POLITICAL ATTACK.

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FOLLOWING THE INCIDENT, CHAVEZ MAINTAINED THE HIGH-ROAD, STICKING TO PATRIOTIC THEMES DURING THE MILITARY PARADE. END SUMMARY.

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ANOTHER INDEPENDENCE DAY LIKE ANY OTHER?  
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3. (C) VENEZUELAN'S BEGAN THE DAY-LONG CEREMONY MARKING THEIR 188TH INDEPENDENCE DAY WITH THE TRADITIONAL READING OF THE DECLARATION OF INDEPENDENCE IN THE SENATE, WHICH WAS THEN FOLLOWED BY A CONCILIATORY, STATESMAN-LIKE SPEECH BY PRESIDENT HUGO CHAVEZ. THE CEREMONIES THEN MOVED TO THE CHAMBER OF DEPUTIES SIDE OF CONGRESS WHERE IT IS TRADITIONAL FOR AN INVITED SPEAKER FROM OUTSIDE THE GOVERNMENT TO DELIVER A KEYNOTE ADDRESS REVOLVING AROUND THE BROAD THEMES OF VENEZUELAN HISTORY AND VALUES. THIS YEAR'S INVITED SPEAKER, ATTORNEY, CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY CANDIDATE, AND FORMER CHAVEZ ALLY JORGE OLAVARRIA LAUNCHED A SCATHING PERSONAL ATTACK ON THE PRESIDENT.

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A PERSONAL ATTACK  
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4. (C) OLAVARRIA CALLED CHAVEZ A "DEMAGOGUE" AND ACCUSED HIM OF VARIOUS VIOLATIONS OF THE CONSTITUTIONS. MEANWHILE, CHAVEZ SAT

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CALMLY BEHIND THE ORATOR, TAKING NOTES AND SHOWING NO SIGNS OF  
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DISCONTENT. OLAVARRIA'S WORDS CENTERED ON CHAVEZ' ALLEGED  
DISRESPECT FOR THE NATION'S INSTITUTIONAL POWERS AND INSISTENCE ON  
STEPPING OVER LAWS CONTAINED IN THE CONSTITUTION. "THE PRESIDENT,"  
OBSERVED OLAVARRIA, "BELIEVES HE HAS RECEIVED ABSOLUTE DICTATORIAL  
POWERS FROM POPULAR MANDATE...IN A TRAGIC EUPHEMISM OF POPULAR  
WILL." "CHAVEZ," HE SAID, "DOES NOT BELIEVE HE NEEDS TO ABIDE BY  
ANY OTHER LAW THAN POPULAR WILL." "IT IS CLEAR," SAID OLAVARRIA,  
"THAT NOBODY CAN IGNORE THE REPEATED THREATS THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS  
DIRECTED AT CONGRESS, THE SUPREME COURT AND ITS MAGISTRATES, THE  
PUBLIC PROSECUTOR AND THE COMPTROLLER GENERAL, THE NATIONAL  
ELECTORAL COUNCIL AND THE ARMED FORCES." "HE WRITES LETTER TO THE  
SUPREME COURT CHALLENGING THEIR AUTHORITY--AND NOTHING HAPPENS,"  
CONTINUED OLAVARRIA. "HE PUBLICLY ACCUSES MEMBERS OF THE COURT OF  
CORRUPTION--AND NOTHING HAPPENS. HE SAYS THE CONSTITUTIONAL  
ASSEMBLY IS GOING TO REPLACE CONGRESS AND THE REST OF THE  
GOVERNMENT--AND NOTHING HAPPENS."

5. (C) OLAVARRIA ALLEGED THAT CHAVEZ "DISRESPECTED THE LAWS OF THE  
CONSTITUTION" AND "OPENLY INSTIGATES DISRESPECT FOR CONGRESS."  
ALTHOUGH THE PRESIDENT CLAIMS TO BE MOTIVATED BY REFORM, OLAVARRIA  
ASSERTED, "HIS ATTITUDE IS NOT THAT OF A REFORMER." CHARGING THAT

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R 071819Z JUL 99  
FM AMEMBASSY CARACAS  
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INFO USCINCSO MIAMI FL  
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AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES  
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO  
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 02 OF 03 CARACAS 002123

DEPT FOR ACTING A/S ROMERO AND WHA/AND

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THE PRESIDENT PRETENDS TO CREATE A "DE FACTO GOVERNMENT," OLAVARRIA ASSERTED THAT "NOT A SINGLE CONSTITUTIONAL POWER HAS BEEN EXEMPT FROM HIS THREATS." CHAVEZ' RECENT DECISION TO PROMOTE MILITARY OFFICIALS IN SPITE OF SENATE DISAPPROVAL WAS ALSO CITED BY OLAVARRIA AS AN EXAMPLE OF CHAVEZ' SCORN FOR THE INSTITUTIONS OF GOVERNMENT. "HE PROMOTES MILITARY OFFICERS WHILE IGNORING THE SENATE'S OPINION, DESPITE INSTITUTIONALIZED PROCEDURES FOR PROMOTION," SAID OLAVARRIA, POINTING OUT THAT THE IDEA FOR LEGISLATIVE CONFIRMATION OF VENEZUELAN MILITARY PROMOTIONS WAS ORIGINATED BY BOLIVAR. HE ALSO ACCUSED CHAVEZ OF "UNDERMINING ONE OF THE COUNTRY'S MOST PRESTIGIOUS INSTITUTIONS--THE ARMED FORCES."

6. (C) CONCLUDING, OLAVARRIA CALLED ON THE SUPREME COURT OF JUSTICE (CSJ) TO DECIDE WHETHER OR NOT THE PRESIDENT'S ACTS MERIT PROSECUTION. SHOULD THE CSJ JUDGE THAT THE PRESIDENT HAS OVERSTEPPED THE LAW, RECOMMENDED OLAVARRIA, THE MATTER SHOULD BE BROUGHT BEFORE THE SENATE. OLAVARRIA CALLED ON VENEZUELAN TO RID THEMSELVES OF THEIR APATHY AND CONFORMITY AND ACT AGAINST "THIS VIOLENCE AND IRREALITY." DEFENDING HIS PERFORMANCE DURING A POST-CEREMONY INTERVIEW, OLAVARRIA SAID, "I AM ASSUMING MY RESPONSIBILITY TO LEAD. THE PRESIDENT HAS CHALLENGED THE COUNTRY'S INSTITUTIONS, AND I AM SAYING IT IS WRONG." OLAVARRIA SAID HE MAINTAINED RESPECT FOR THE INSTITUTION OF THE PRESIDENCY, BUT "I WILL NOT REMOVE MYSELF FROM PUBLIC DEBATE. THIS IS NOT TIME FOR  
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HISTORIC DISCOURSES, BUT TO TALK ABOUT WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW."

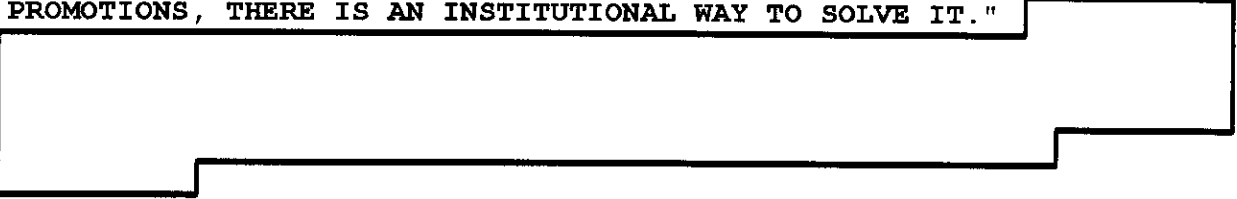
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## REACTION TO THE SPEECH

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7. (C) OLAVARRIA'S SPEECH WAS INTERRUPTED AT LEAST THREE TIMES BY SENATE PRESIDENT AND CHAVEZ ALLY LUIS ALFONSO DAVILA, WHO CALLED FOR RESPECT FOR THE PRESIDENT AND THE CEREMONY. "YOU'VE INSULTED CONGRESS AND ALL OF US WHO HAVE COME HERE IN A DAY OF UTMOST SIGNIFICANCE FOR THE COUNTRY," SAID DAVILA, A RETIRED ARMY COLONEL. "WE HAVE NOT COME HERE TO LISTEN TO YOUR INSULTS AGAINST THE PRESIDENT." SUPREME COURT PRESIDENT CELIA SOSA GOMEZ AND MEMBERS OF THE MILITARY HIGH COMMAND WALKED OUT OF THE SESSION. SOSA DEFIANTLY ASSERTED THAT THE SUPREME COURT DOES NOT NEED ORATORS TO DEFEND IT; "IT DOES QUITE WELL ON ITS OWN." MINISTER OF DEFENSE RAUL SALAZAR STOICALLY OBSERVED THAT "THE MILITARY FOLLOWS THE CONSTITUTION AND THE LAW," ADDING "IF THERE IS ANY QUESTION ABOUT PROMOTIONS, THERE IS AN INSTITUTIONAL WAY TO SOLVE IT."



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8. (C) SOCIAL CHRISTIAN PARTY (COPEI) CONGRESSIONAL FACTION LEADER CESAR PEREZ VIVAS COMMENTED THAT "CONGRESS, AS A CENTER OF DEBATE, HAS BECOME THE SCENE OF CRUDE CONFRONTATION." PEREZ CAST SOME OF THE BLAME FOR OLAVARRIA'S EXCESSES ON CHAVEZ. "THIS IS PART OF THE TENSE POLITICAL CLIMATE THAT HAS BEEN CREATED IN OUR COUNTRY," HE SAID. "THE PRESIDENT HAS VERY AGGRESSIVELY BROUGHT ISSUES BEFORE

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THE GOVERNMENT AND THE PUBLIC, ESPECIALLY IN THE PAST FEW DAYS...THIS SPEECH IS A RESPONSE TO THESE ACTIVITIES." IT'S A SHAME THAT IT HAS COME TO THIS," SAID PEREZ. "HOPEFULLY, THE TONE AN TENOR OF THE DEBATE WILL DIMINISH AS MORE RESPECTFUL PUBLIC DISCOURSE EMERGES." ECHOING DEFENSE MINISTER SALAZAR'S COMMENTS, PEREZ CONCLUDED THAT "THE LAW AND THE CONSTITUTION MUST BE INTERPRETED AND CARRIED OUT BY THE SUPREME COURT AND FISCAL GENERAL." PEREZ' COPEI COLLEAGUE, CONGRESSMAN PEDRO SEGUNDO BLANCO SAID OLAVARRIA "SHOULD HAVE HAD MORE RESPECT FOR THE OCCASION, ALTHOUGH THE SPEECH DELIVERED AN IMPORTANT MESSAGE TO THE PRESIDENT, WHICH REFLECTS THE VIEWS OF A LOT OF PEOPLE." FOREIGN MINISTER JOSE VICENTE RAMGEL'S COMMENTS WERE ALOOF AND CIRCUMSPECT, CRITICIZING OLAVARRIA FOR NOT SUFFICIENTLY UNDERSTANDING "HOW TO INTERPRET THE NATIONAL PROCESS," OR THE COUNTRY'S CURRENT SITUATION. RAMGEL EXPRESSED RESPECT FOR OLAVARRIA'S RIGHT TO SELF EXPRESSION, ALTHOUGH HE THOUGH IT WAS IRRESPONSIBLE OF HIM TO USE THE INDEPENDENCE DAY FORUM FOR HIS OWN POLITICAL PURPOSES.

9. (C) OPPOSITION AD PARTY LEADER CANACHE MATA LAID THE

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RESPONSIBILITY FOR OLAVARRIA'S SPEECH SQUARELY ON CHAVEZ.  
"CHAVEZ," HE SAID, "HAS OFFENDED EACH OF THE COUNTRY'S

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INSTITUTIONS, AND TODAY'S SPEECH IS THE CONSEQUENCE OF THAT  
BEHAVIOR. BESIDES CANACHE MATA, PROJECT VENEZUELA (PV)  
CONGRESSIONAL FACTION LEADER MIREYA RODRIGUEZ WAS ONE OF THE FEW TO

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PUBLICLY SUPPORT OLAVARRIA'S PRESENTATION. "WE MUST CONFRONT THE DICTATORSHIP THAT CONFRONTS US," SAID RODRIGUEZ. "THAT IS NOT TO SAY THERE SHOULD NOT BE RADICAL CHANGE, BUT THAT CHANGE MUST TAKE PLACE MAINTAINING RESPECT FOR INSTITUTIONS."

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CHAVEZ REFRAINS FROM RESPONDING  
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10. (C) A TRADITIONAL INDEPENDENCE DAY MILITARY PARADE FOLLOWED THE CEREMONY. THE BISHOP OF CARACAS OPENED THE PARADE WITH A BENEDICTION CALLING FOR RENEWED FAITH IN GOVERNMENT, AND FOR THE GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT THAT RENEWED FAITH BY "MAKING SOCIETY MORE JUST, AND REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLES' DESIRES." CHAVEZ REITERATED HIS CUSTOMARY THEMES: "THE VENEZUELAN PEOPLE ARE THE TRUE MASTERS OF THE VENEZUELAN GOVERNMENT," THE NEED TO RAISE A FEELING OF DIGNITY AMONG THE PEOPLE, AND THE IMPORTANCE OF WIDER MILITARY PARTICIPATION IN PUBLIC LIFE. "THE ARMED FORCES," SAID CHAVEZ, "WILL WORK TOGETHER WITH THE REST OF THE COUNTRY TO BUILD A TRUE DEMOCRACY BASED ON THE DESIRES OF THE PEOPLE, AND A STABLE POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SYSTEM." HIS ATYPICALLY SHORT SPEECH WAS  
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REPLETE WITH ALLUSIONS TO CHRISTIANITY, AND A PHILOSOPHY HE CALLS "REVOLUTIONARY HUMANISM." CHAVEZ PRAISED THE ARMED FORCES FOR DEFENDING HUMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS, AND FOR ITS PATIENCE AND CONSTANCY. "RESPECT FOR THE SOLDIER," SAID CHAVEZ, "IS RESPECT FOR ALL VENEZUELAN." MAINTAINING THE HIGH-ROAD IN HIS REMARKS, CHAVEZ REFRAINED FROM REFERRING TO OLAVARRIA'S DISCOURSE, STICKING TO PATRIOTIC THEMES. THE PRESIDENT DID, HOWEVER, DECLARE THE END OF A PERIOD OF "CORRUPTOCRACY" AND SAID THAT "VENEZUELA WAS OPENING UP TO A PERIOD OF TRUE DEMOCRACY, ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEMOCRACY IN WHICH JUSTICE PREVAILS...LEAVING BEHIND A TYRANNY OF COWARDS." CHAVEZ CONCLUDED THE DAY'S REMARKS, LOOKING FORWARD TO THE UPCOMING CONSTITUTIONAL ASSEMBLY WHICH WILL CONSTRUCT A COUNTRY THAT IS "TRULY DEMOCRATIC AND REPRESENTATIVE OF THE PEOPLE."

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